National Historian's Report...

THE 1986 AMTA ARCHIVES PROJECT

In 1943, the American Association of Masseurs and Masseuses was formed by a group of massage operators studying at the College of Swedish Massage in Chicago, Illinois. Starting with twenty-nine members who signed the association's pledge and paid their dues of 50¢, the A.A.M.M. has evolved into a national organization of over 4000 active, student, Associate and Auxilary members. Now called the American Massge Therapy Association, the organization continues to address issues important to its members.

After forty-two years of growth and development, it is time to look back over those early years and take stock of our accomplishments, to note goals yet to be reached, and to chart the course of our past so we can better understand our position today. It is time to start writing the AMTA history.

History has its practical uses. An organization can learn from its successes and failures to continue beneficial practices and avoid past mistakes. It can glory in its triumphs, and honor devoted members. Massage therapists, in particular, can better understand their place in the field of health care, and their response as a group to political efforts to control their work. The organization can evaluate how it has addressed the needs of members, or failed to meet their needs throughout the years.

But besides practical considerations, there is further value in preserving our past. Knowledge of our history can help us form a collective identity as massage therapists. We have a common heritage. We can identify with the struggles of our professional ancestors, and see our place in the onflowing events of life. Some of our present struggles are the same as our forebearers. Control of our own work and upgrading the standards of practitioners have been constant themes in the history of the AMTA. At different times, our response to these challenges has taken various forms. Knowing our history can afford us a place in this flow of events, give us a sense of context to view our present work.

To preserve the history of the AMTA, it is necessary to collect and keep in one place, the official and unofficial records of the organization. The history of the AMTA is found in official records of officers, reports of committees, minutes of meetings, convention programs, and publications such as pamphlets and journals. Letters of officers and other members may shed light on thinking behind some projects or some personal or political struggles. Pictures of people and events give us a visual record of the past, showing who we were, how we dressed, and what conditions we worked under. Patches, pins, posters, and other items all contribute to our understanding of AMTA history.

The Archives Project 1986. Historical records and artifacts are normally preserved in storehouses called archives. It is time to start the AMTA archives before irreplaceable materials are lost. Since there has been no central repository of records, various officers and committee members have kept their own files. Records are often passed down to incoming officers and committees, but in the process over the years, articles get lost or thrown out. The archivist/historian collects materials, files and preserves them for use of interested members or for offical publications.

1986 is the year in which the official AMTA archives will be established and we need the help of all present and past members to locate historical materials. Items donated to the archives will be preserved for future generations of massage therapists. The following list contains the items we are particularly interested in locating to begin the archives project.

1. Copies of *The Masseur,* the official publication of the A.A.M.M., beginning in 1943.
2. Copies of *The Massage Journal,* current publication of the AMTA.
3. Convention and Conference programs from 1943 to the present.
4. Early certificates of membership.
5. Original and early By-Laws and Pledge.
6. Records and reports from early Officers and Committees.
7. The model "Massage Registration Act" adopted at the National Convention in Chicago in 1950.
8. Leaflet by Harry McConnells, "Little Known Facts," made available to A.A.M.M. members in 1949.
9. Pictures of early A.A.M.M. or AMTA Officers and events.
10. Sleeve emblems, pins and other identifying items not currently in use.

If you have any of these items, particularly from the 1940's through 1960's, please consider donating them to the AMTA archives. Also, if you have items not listed but which you think might be of historical interest (e.g., old books or news articles on massage), please contact us. Please send a letter telling us what you have to donate, or information on where we might find historical items to:

Patricia J. Benjamin, Ph.D., AMTA Historian
417 Argyle
Elmhurst, Illinois 60126

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Help preserve your professional heritage. Be part of the archives project today. A progress report will appear in the next issue of *The Massage Journal.*